

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 09256 260724Z

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SP-02 INR-05 AID-05 SSO-00 INRE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1909

INFO DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC CAMP HM SMITH HI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

SECDEF WASHDC

COMIPAC HONOLULU HI

MACTHAI J-2 BKK THAI

DEPCHIEF UDORN RTAFB

13AF ASIC CLARK AFB RP

USSAG/IN NKP RTAFB THAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 9256

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MOPS, LA

SUBJECT: SITUATION REPORT: BAN HOUEI SAI

REFS: A. VIENTIANE 9244 (NOTAL)

B. VIENTIANE 9242 (NOTAL)

1. SECURE COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITY IS BEING ESTABLISHED AT CHIANG KHONG, ACROSS MEKONG FROM BAN HOUEI SAI, TO ALLOW U.S. MISSION VIENTIANE RECEIVE UP-TO-MINUTE INFORMATION ON BHS SITUATION FROM CLOSE SOURCE.

2. LATEST MESSAGE FROM AREA COORDINATOR HUXTABLE, RECEIVED OVER OPERATION BROTHERHOOD RADIO NET AT 1045 HOURS LOCAL DECEMBER 26, STATES: "SITUATION EXTREMELY SERIOUS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 VIENTI 09256 260724Z

REQUEST NEGOTIATIONS TO BE INITIATED FOR OUR RELEASE."

THIS MESSAGE APPEARS TO CONFIRM SUGGESTIONS IN MONITORED REBEL CONVERSATIONS OVER USAID RADIO NET DECEMBER 25 AND EARLY AM. DECEMBER 26 THAT REBEL LEADERS WERE CONTEMPLATING USE OF AMERICANS (AND POSSIBLY OF OTHER FOREIGNERS) IN BHS AS HOSTAGES. SO FAR WE KNOW OF NO RPT NO EXPLICIT REBEL STATEMENTS OR DEMANDS CITING AMERICANS AS HOSTAGES OR OTHERWISE THREATENING THEIR SAFETY, ALTHOUGH THIS MUST BE CONSIDERED A LIKELY DEVELOPMENT.

3. WE PLAN TO TRY TO ESTABLISH COVERT COMMUNICATIONS LINK BETWEEN CHIANG KHONG AND USAID AREA COORDINATOR, BHS TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF EXTRACTING U.S. EMPLOYEES AND DEPENDENTS FROM BHS ACROSS RIVER TO CHIANG KHONG. THIS POSSIBLE COURSE OF ACTION, HOWEVER, WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO ACCOMPLISH. U.S. PERSONNEL IN BHS ARE LOCATED AT TWO PLACES: HUXTABLE'S HOME WHICH IS ON RIVER BANK, AND USAID GUEST HOUSE WHICH IS INLAND, NOT ON RIVER. MOVEMENT OF PERSONNEL FROM USAID GUEST HOUSE TO RIVER MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE.

4. WE WILL REPLY BY SEPTTEL TO STATE 281278 (AIDAC) REGARDING AMERICAN AND OTHER FOREIGN PERSONNEL CURRENTLY IN BAN HOU EI SAI. IN ADDITION TO RESIDENT OFFICIAL PERSONNEL AND DEPENDENTS WE UNDERSTAND THERE ARE SEVERAL U.S. AND ONE BRITISHER VISITING FROM VIENTIANE AND WEST GERMAN MILITARY ATTACHE AND DOCTOR FROM SAIGON.

5. AMBASSADOR SAW FONMIN PHOUMI THIS MORNING TO EXPRESS HIS CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT FOREIGNERS, PARTICULARLY AMERICANS, IN BAN HOU EI SAI MIGHT BECOME HOSTAGES OR BE ENDANGERED. HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT RUMORS IN VIENTIANE INDICATED THAT PATHET LAO FORCES HAD MOVED INTO THE BAN HOU EI SAI AREA. HE SAID HE HOPED THAT THE PATHET LAO WERE NOT USING THE CURRENT DISTURBANCE IN BAN HOU EI SAI AS A PRETEXT TO TAKE OVER THIS PORTION OF THE VIENTIANE ZONE. PHOUMI STATED THAT PATRIOTIC FORCES HAD MOVED INTO THE BAN HOU EI SAI AREA AS A MEASURE OF PRECAUTION IN THE EVENT THAT THE DISSIDENT TROOPS SHOULD BE ATTEMPTING TO SEPARATE BAN HOU EI SAI FROM THE REST OF LAOS. HE AGREED WITH THE AMBASSADOR THAT THIS WAS A MOST UNLIKELY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VIENTI 09256 260724Z

CONTINGENCY AND AFFIRMED THAT PATHET LAO FORCES WOULD WITHDRAW ONCE TRANQUILITY HAD BEEN RESTORED. PPHOUMI SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE KNEW, THERE WAS NO RISK TO FOREIGNERS AT THIS TIME BUT THAT IF THEY WISH TO LEAVE THEY SHOULD BE FREE TO DO SO. HE SAID THAT MINISTER OF INFORMATION SOUK VONGSAK WOULD PROBABLY BE ONE OF THE PGNU NEGOTIATORS WHO WOULD GO TO BAN HOU EI SAI SHORTLY. HE WOULD TRY TO GET WORD TO SOUK THAT ALL FOREIGNERS SHOULD BE

PERMITTED TO CROSS THE RIVER IF THEY SO DESIRE.
PHOUMI WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE HISTORY OF THE REBEL UNIT
AND OF ITS PREVIOUS GRIEVANCES AGAINST THE FAR COMMAND
IN THAT AREA. HE SEEMED TO BELIEVE THAT ONCE THESE
GRIEVANCES HAD BEEN RESOLVED, THE SITUATION WOULD RETURN
TO NORMAL.

6. AMBASSADOR WILL SEE PRIME MINISTER IN LUANG PRABANG
AT 1600 HOURS LOCAL DECEMBER 26 TO DISCUSS SITUATION AND
URGE THAT PGNU IN DIALOGUE WITH "REBELS" PRESS FOR RE-
LEASE OF ALL FOREIGNERS WHO ARE IN BAN HOU EI SAIL.
WHITEHOUSE

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